

The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
J. H. OLDHAM

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DEAR MEMBER,

Our country is passing through a double crisis. It is facing a greater peril to its national existence and security than it has ever known. And as a means of averting that peril it has submitted to a radical change in its social institutions.

The hour of national danger brings its own opportunities of Christian witness and service. We can steady our hearts by trust in God and so diffuse a spirit of fortitude, serenity and calm. By a daily act of inward, joyful acceptance we can make what the law has demanded from us part of ourselves—the surrender of our lives, our services and our property to the common good. By deeds of service we can help to create the kind of community which is so precious that no sacrifice is too great for its preservation.

The other crisis through which we have passed demands from us a radical change in our accustomed habits of thought—a change far more radical than most people yet realise. We have yielded to the State complete control of the lives and wealth of its citizens. We have had, as someone has put it, to surrender our liberties to Mr. Attlee in order to avoid having to surrender them to Hitler, knowing that we can get them back from Mr. Attlee, though not from Hitler. This is true, and the difference—at least so far as present intentions go—is profound. But it is idle to suppose that we shall ever get our liberties back in the form in which we have known them in the past. There is bound to be in the future a vastly increased measure of central co-ordination.

A. PLANNED SOCIETY

To be efficient in war society must be planned as a whole. We shall wake up to the fact that in peace also a planned society is inescapable. To adjust our minds to all that the change implies will be a long process. Those who want to understand some of the implications and are willing to tackle a difficult book should read Professor Karl Mannheim's *Man and Society* (Kegan Paul, 68-74, Carter Lane, E.C.: 16s. 6d.), which has just been published. It is one of those rare books which open the mind to a new dimension of reality. I hope to devote a Supplement to it before long. The vital issue with which it deals is whether it is possible to have a planned society which is planned for freedom.

I said that the new situation requires a radical change in our habits of thought. In particular, we must jettison many of our past ideas about the relation of the Church to the State. A planned society implies central control, and in such a society *nothing* can exist or function except by permission of the central authority. If the Church is to keep its freedom, it will only be because the central authority is persuaded that religious freedom is a good thing. There will be room in a planned society for the Christian life and service only in the measure that we succeed in Christianising the new State;

that is to say, in so far as the activities of the State are directed to Christian and human ends. While it is a matter of life or death for the Church that it should retain its independence of the State, the only means by which that independence can be retained is by Christians participating so effectively in the life of the nation as to induce the State to respect that independence.

The planning of society raises another issue of crucial importance. A planned society must set itself to educate its citizens to carry out its policies. It must aim at influencing not only their minds but their emotions, and it has at its disposal for this purpose a growing psychological knowledge and the new techniques of propaganda. The ends for which these incalculably powerful forces are brought into play may be other than Christian ends. There is no more vital question to-day than the question how the individual Christian and individual citizen may be trained and helped to withstand psychological pressure directed to wrong ends.

A FRENCH ROMAN CATHOLIC ON KARL BARTH

The cataclysm of war sets everything in a fresh light, and opens up new perspectives. It reveals unsuspected affinities and creates new bonds between those who have been separated in thought and faith. In an article in *Le Temps Présent*, M. François Mauriac, of the French Academy, comments on the letter of Professor Karl Barth, part of which we published as a Supplement. M. Mauriac is not only a novelist and dramatist of international reputation—some of his books have appeared in English translations—but one of the most distinguished Catholic writers of France. You may be interested in a few quotations from his article to illustrate his point of view:

“Although a Catholic, I feel no hesitation in affirming that the letter of the famous Calvinist theologian Karl Barth to the French members of his communion . . . has given me the key-word which in these days I was needing: the word of a Christian who furthermore does not side with either of the belligerents on the political plane.

“A native of Bâle, but professor of theology at Bonn, Karl Barth had been preaching the gospel in Germany for years, when Hitler—the persecutor of the faith—forced him to take refuge in Switzerland. His love of the German people is visible in every line. He is sorry for them. No principle inclines him to the side of the Allies. But this great Christian speaks out of what he has seen: between the nations at grips, he gives his voice for those in which there remains some religious freedom, and in which the preaching of the gospel is still possible.

“Is that all? you will say. I consider that it is a great deal, for us who are French Catholics, accustomed to silence in high places and who have no thought of complaining, as we know (according to the established formula) that there are great interests at stake. But when one of our separated brethren of Germanic race, and of a faith worthy of respect, recognises that we are fighting for ‘that which is more precious than life’—I confess that this testimony comforts me. We cannot ask more of a theologian who, though not surrendering to despair, concedes almost nothing to human nature, and who is unutterably impressed by the infinite misery of man in relation to God.

“On the day on which Hitler is finally defeated, Karl Barth will no doubt applaud to see the justice of God make use of Sin to conquer Sin . . . No matter! he will remain for us the pastor who, recalling the *il faut en finir* of Daladier, added: ‘Every Christian whose life during these years has been fully conscious can say to such a declaration only *Yes* and *Amen*.’

“This, no doubt, is only a drop of water: but such is our thirst for justice, so parched are we, that none the less we must cry our thanks to this sombre Samaritan.”

THE RELATION OF THE SEXES IN WAR TIME

One of our members who is a doctor writes to me about a question which has not so far found a place in the News-Letter. I hope to have a Supplement on the subject before long. In the meantime I quote what the writer says:

"Among the many important topics dealt with in the Supplements to the C.N.L., there is one which (so far as I remember) has not yet appeared—the relations between men and women in war time. I feel sure it is an omission which ought to be repaired. For a great many people — married and unmarried — it is at this point that war hits hardest. When we talk about the destruction of life involved in warfare we almost always (and naturally enough) think of death on the battlefields. But before the first soldier was killed or the first bomb dropped, there began in every belligerent country the destruction of home life, the separation of husbands and wives, the distortion of relations between men and women throughout their whole range.

"We know agony when we see it in others or find it in our own souls ; but licence and frivolity are no less tragic, and these we are content to deplore. Protest against particular and flagrant abuses is justified and necessary ; but there is much more to be done. The great majority of young men and women, in the forces and outside them, have not been brought up with any clear grasp of Christian morals and with no conception at all of the grounds in which they rest. They find themselves flung into a situation which has destroyed at one blow the natural pattern of marriage and home and family life, through which they expected to find the fulfilment of those 'instincts and affections implanted by God.' (For most of those who marry, there can be no home: there are to be no children.)

"The 'natural pattern' being broken, what is left? These young people have grown up in a society which has idolized romantic love ; Press and screen have taught them that 'love' (by which Hollywood means sexual passion) is 'the sweetest thing.' All around them are voices urging them to take what they can get while there's time ; they are not responsible for the mess the world is in: why should they be cheated of the experience because they happened to be born ten years too late? And so on. All sorts of unscrupulous interests exploit their tense nerves and heightened desires.

"In the midst of all this the Church affirms chastity before marriage as a solemn obligation to which there are no exceptions. What do we mean by it? Can we justify it? Can we at any rate make it easier of achievement than it so often now is? Can we at least explain what we mean in such wise that young folk will listen to us? For it is they, after all, who are going to remake our society ; and what they believe in their hearts about the real meaning of sex, the purpose of marriage, the nature of family life, will be of more consequence for that society than almost anything else."

FINLAND

The following letter, which appears in the bulletin of the World Student Christian Federation, brings a word of Spiritual encouragement from Finland:

"I have received your letter written on Easter Day, and want to thank you for your hearty message of sympathy. We have truly felt that Christian friends have been with us during the days of fight. The upholding and preserving grace of God surrounded us in manifold ways. We know that you are standing with us still. God bless you for that. The peace brought with it terrible suffering and desperate need. We need special grace to take everything from God's hand day by day, and we need faith and courage to fight this new fight of less glory. Though this all feels hard, I believe there is no mistake and no mere chance in it, but the loving Father is seeking to bless us. . . ."

TWO NEW PUBLICATIONS

Two small volumes have just been published to which many of our members will be glad to have their attention called.

The first is the Active Service edition of *The Little Bible*—a shortened Bible of over 400 pages printed in clear type. It fits the pocket, and the binding is waterproof. It is published by the Oxford University Press and the price is 2s. 6d. The New Testament section can be obtained separately at 1s. 6d.

The second volume is a collection of prayers arranged by the Rev. F. A. Iremonger, the Dean of Lichfield, who was for six years the Director of Religious Broadcasting. The features of the publication are that the prayers have been prepared specifically for use in war time; that they cover a wider range of spiritual needs than those related directly and immediately to the war; and that to obviate the staleness which comes from repeated use of the same forms a different set of prayers is provided for each day of the month. The title of the volume is *Each Returning Day*, and it is published by the British Broadcasting Corporation. The price is 1s., or 1s. 3d. by post.

TOWARDS £500.

It is with deep gratitude and a sense of pride in our membership that I am able to tell you that the £500 for which we asked has already been contributed. You have done this during one of the most difficult periods in our national life. Thank you for your understanding and loyalty.

We shall be more dependent than ever in these coming days on our members for increasing the circulation of the Christian News-Letter. We know that a good many people are looking for the kind of help that the News-Letter tries to give. Will you join in furthering the work which it is trying to do by securing at least one new member? If each of you were to persuade a friend to subscribe our membership would be 20,000. With this in mind we have prepared a new leaflet which is enclosed with this letter. Paper is now scarce and we do not want any of the copies of the leaflet we are sending out this week to be wasted. If you can use more leaflets or would like a sample copy of the C.N.-L. sent to a friend, will you let us know?

Yours sincerely,

J. H. Oldham

Index. A complete index has been compiled to cover News-Letters 0-26. We think members might like to add this to their folders. The price is 1s.

Subscriptions. — The rate of subscriptions to the News-Letter is 12s. 6d. (\$3.0 in U.S.A. and Canada) for one year, and 6s. 6d. (\$1.50 in U.S.A. and Canada) for six months, and 3s. 6d. for three months.

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